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Philosophy

- By Kristin Borgerson

Philosophy can be misconstrued, but Borgerson intends to demystify the subject. Stereotypes of philosophy imply that philosophy is restricted to men in seclusion, as depicted by “The Thinker”, a famous statue. Philosophy is more inclusive and interactive than stereotypes would have one believe.

Philosophers present an argument, and their peers attempt to poke holes in their argument to improve it. A philosophic argument requires charitably hearing and understanding others’ views. An argument should include a group of statements, one of which (the conclusion) is supported by the others (the premises).

EX:

P1: All Dalhousie students are intelligent

P2: You are a Dalhousie student

C: You are intelligent

P1 rebuttal: The meaning of intelligence is unclear; what makes a person intelligent? IQ, emotional intelligence, work/school balance, having had a GPA out of high school averaging 70%, etc.

Concepts are just abstract ideas which must be further defined to be used in an argument. They are the founding piece of the argument.

There are three big groups in philosophy: metaphysics (existence of God, limitations of God, etc.), epistemology (what can humans truly know, how credibility is assigned), and ethics (what is the right thing to do, how to live a good life, moral personhood, rights, death)

Autonomy is self-rule and self-determination. If one has autonomy, they make decisions in their life for themself. All major ethics theorists would support elements from the idea of autonomy.

Consent is the autonomous authorization for someone to interact with someone else in a situation which would otherwise be considered unwarranted or unethical. The “moral magic” of consent changes something heinous into something acceptable.

Token consent could lead to a lack of knowledge or understanding of the subject, there is no connection or trust between the patient and the doctor, there was no consideration of the offer (no due diligence), the patient is not aware of the consequences and may be poorly readied to handle the aftermath, the surgery may not even be necessary, the patient OR surgeon may not be of sound mind, the patient may have been coerced in some manner by either their partner or doctor, and there must be some standard of care. Consent protects BOTH parties. There are groups of people who are incapable of making decisions for themselves, so token consent cannot be applicable to them.

Elements of informed consent: competence, disclosure, understanding, voluntariness, and token consent.

Competency is the ability to provide recognizable reasons for one’s choices; it must be evaluated and reevaluated. Disclosure is the person who is seeking consent should provide information on what is to be consented to. Understanding requires being on the same page. Voluntariness requires the freedom to choose, and they will the action without another’s influence. Token consent is a signature on a form, or LACK of signature, which is ongoing but may be revoked at any time. Failure of any of those five elements results in a lack of informed consent.

Understanding requires that the person is giving consent, they know how to exercise their right to give OR refuse to consent, and to what they are being asked to consent.

Misunderstandings of informed consent include someone requiring they be involved in the consent of another autonomous person, reproductive rights in the U.S.A., gender affirming rights w/parents, etc.

Explicit consent and specific consent are the best kinds. In addition to explicit consent, there is implicit consent. Implicit consent is inferable from prior actions or in cases of emergency (technically untrue). In addition to specific consent, there is general consent. General consent is consent to a range of operations or care performed by various surgeons, not a specific operation or surgeon.